

Dear Chairs Elliott and Slap, Vice Chairs Turco and Flexer, Ranking Members Haines and Witkos, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Bradley Nowacek and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing in support of H.B. 5033, which addresses food insecurity among students at public institutions of higher education. This bill would require such institutions to assess and address food insecurity among students and to increase access to the supplemental nutrition assistance program for eligible students.

Black and low-income students are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. A study done by the University of Connecticut estimated that around 35% of Connecticut college students suffer from food insecurities. Amongst these alarming statistics, Black students constitute fifty-eight percent, which is 19% higher than the overall rate for students identifying as White or Caucasian. Students experiencing food insecurity have a lower average GPA, and higher rates of depression and nutrition deficiencies.

The current efforts at this addressing the problem are insufficient and leave students struggling to get by. Many students are forced to take out loans simply to pay for food. Some states (for example California) have taken effective steps to address this problem, but Connecticut lags behind. In the short term, this leaves low-income students at a considerable disadvantage. In the long term, it prevents them from taking full advantage of their college education, reducing the benefits they will be able to bring to the state in years to come.

I urge you to address the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. The consequences of food insecurity impact their ability to perform well in and out of school and have a life-long impact on their development and livelihood. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Higher Education Committee so that these individuals have a chance at fulfilling their best potential.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Bradley Nowacek
New Haven, CT